DEMOCRATIC
GERMAN REPORT

Vol. X No. 12 June 9th 1961 Price: 15 Pf, 5c, 3d.

JUL 13 1962

O. K. FOR A-WARSHIPS

Plus Panzers, Bases and a Nazi Admiral

Observers in eastern and western Europe checked off one more broken pledge when the Western European Union on May 24th authorised West Germany to build eight 6,000-ton destroyers capable of mounting batteries of surface-to-surface and surface-to-air guided missiles.

In 1954, West Germany was admitted into NATO and allowed to build up its armed forces by the western powers at the London Nine-Power Conference. Critics of this move were placated by a West German pledge, which stated:

"The Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany declares: that the Federal Republic undertakes not to manufacture in its territory ...

I. Atomic weapons

II. Chemical weapons

III. Biological weapons

IV. Long-distance and guided missiles, magnetic and influence mines

V. Warships of more than 3,000 tons displacement. Submarines of more than 350 tons displacement ...

VI. Bomber aircraft for strategic purposes

This pledge, contained in the so-called Revised Brussels Treaty, was already shot full of holes on three occasions, when production of the following weapons was permitted:

Guided anti-tank missiles (May 9th 1958)

A training ship of 4,800 to 5,000 tons (October 16th 1958)

Surface-to-air and air-to-air missiles (October 21st 1959).

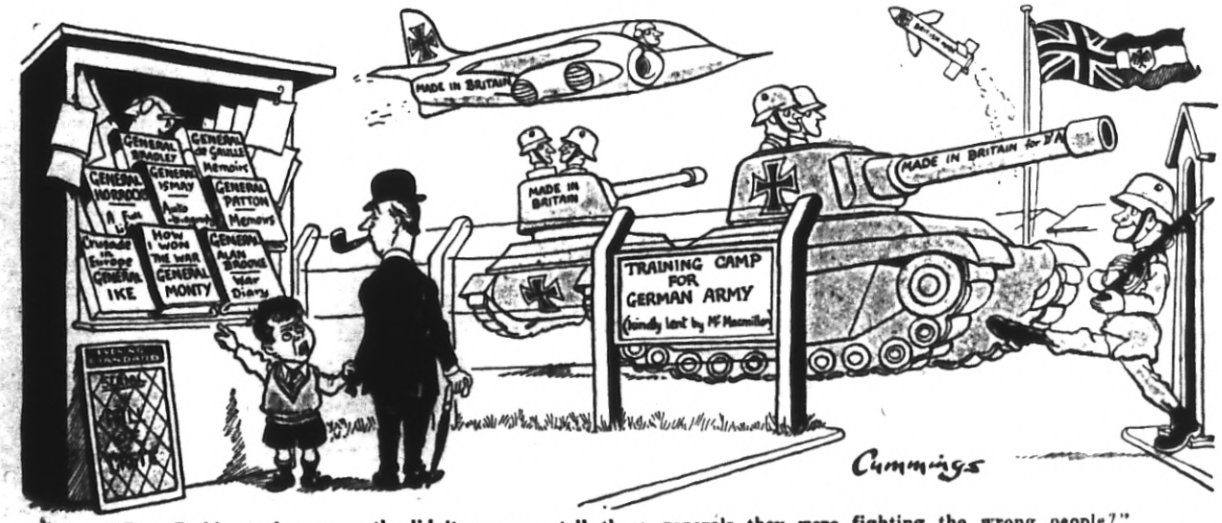
In connection with this last decision, Mr Emmanuel Shinwell, former Labour Defence Minister, commented: "Is this the thin end of the wedge? How long is it going to be before the Supreme Commander (NATO General Norstad, ed.) recommends that the Federal Government should be permitted to manufacture atomic weapons? What sort of nonsense is this?"

The recent decision of the Western European Union made this comment more urgent than ever. Not only was the provision banning large warships dropped (Paragraph V) but also the provision outlawing influence mine production (Paragraph IV). The latter are being openly praised in West Germany as a means of bottling up the Soviet Union in the Baltic Sea.

In commenting on the decision to allow 6,000-ton destroyers, Mr Frank Allaun (Lab., Salford East) stated:

"The purpose of increasing the size of these vessels, in my view, is so that they can carry missiles with nuclear warheads ... Step by step, every restriction on the regrowth of German militarism and German military might is being lifted."

West German military men have found many ways to circumvent those limitations of the Revised Brussels Treaties which have not as yet been lifted. They buy abroad weapons which they are not permitted to produce in West Germany, they share in research and testing of atomic weapons with French atom scientists on French or Algerian soil, and they are free at any time to develop chemical, biological or other prohibited weapons on the territory of countries like Spain or Turkey. And since the West German Government has succeeded in preventing



"But, Daddy — why on earth didn't someone tell those generals they were fighting the wrong people?"

(from "Daily Expreß" London)

(cont. from front page)

any real check on their armaments production by the "Agency for the Control of Armaments" set up for that purpose, there is no real way for the western powers to know which if any remaining parts of the pledge are still intact.

*

The lifting of arms prohibitions was accompanied by four other important new military developments in the same week:

1. After a meeting between West German and British Defence Ministers Strauss and Watkinson, the Bonn Government announced plans to purchase 2,500 105-millimeter tank guns, enough to equip the tanks of 12 West German divisions, as well as 50 "Seacat" guided missiles and other weapons and aircraft motors adding up to an estimated £200m.

2. Defence Minister Strauss announced that preparations were being made for a West German battalion to take part in manoeuvres at Castle Martin in Pembrokeshire (Wales) in the autumn. "The Times", London, stated on May 26th: "Details of the scheme have not yet been worked out, but it is most likely, in the interests of economy and administration, that German tanks will be permanently stationed in Britain while different units use them."

Protests against West German bases increased, especially in Wales. One trade unionist remarked that if they were set up, "what has been done at Holy Loch will be a mere flea bite to what will happen in Wales."

No details about the officers who would command West German troops in Britain were made known in Bonn. All generals and other top officers in the present Bundeswehr without exception also held high rank in Hitler's Wehrmacht, however, the protests pointed out.

3. In an election rally in Hamburg on May 28th, West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer emphasised his government's aim to arm with the latest atomic weapons. He said "I would refuse to have a Bundeswehr face the enemy which was not armed with the most modern of weapons." He claimed that NATO would be of no more use if the West German troops did not have nuclear weapons, and he did not make the usual West German distinction between the rocket launchers and their atomic warheads, which have always been under American control.

"The Federal Republic has powerful allies in the world and is itself sought after as a partner. Germany has again become a great power in the world," he claimed.

4. On May 31st, Adenauer's power claim proved true when Rear Admiral Gerhard Wagner was named Supreme Commander of Allied Naval Forces in the northern sector of Nato's Central European Command. The West German admiral replaced British Rear Admiral Michael Townsend, and was chosen despite growing Danish protests at the idea of Danish forces serving under ex-nazi officers. Wagner had received his Rear Admiral rank from Hitler originally, and had served as Chief of the Operational Department in the nazi Naval War Leadership, where he played an important part in planning the U-boat campaign and the "Bismarck" mission.

Rear Admiral Wagner will soon have the newly-approved West German atomic-armed destroyers under his command.

"Going Too Far?" "A Good Way Yet to Go!"

Mr Shinwell (Easington, Lab.): "Does this mean that Western European Union can of its own volition amend the Brussels Treaty without any consultation with this House and that we are dependent entirely on a decision of W.E.U. in a matter of this sort?

"Although it may be desirable that west Germany should make its contribution to the defence of the west are we not going a little bit too far by permitting them to have naval vessels of this kind armed with atomic weapons?"

Mr Watkinson, Minister of Defence: "This is a matter for Western European Union. As for the question whether Germany is being overarmed, Germany has not yet met the NATO requirements which Supreme Allied Commander in Europe (Gen Norstadt, ed.) has asked and she has a good way yet to go before she is able to play her full part in the NATO alliance."

From the Commons debate, May 31st

Our Friend Il Duce

An exhibit organised by West Germany's Defence Ministry to win paratrooper recruits showed photos glorifying two past victories of German parachute soldiers: their landing at Rotterdam in 1940 after the nazi Luftwaffe had destroyed that city and their rescue, in 1943, of a man the captions called a "friendly statesman". The "statesman" was Italy's dictator Benito Mussolini.

When questioned about the exhibit at a meeting of the Bundestag on May 30th, Defence Minister Franz-Josef Strauss granted that the words describing Mussolini were "not very well chosen" but said that otherwise the exhibit had no political importance.

Ulbricht Suggests: Train or Car Better

In an interview with "Neues Deutschland", party organ of the Socialist Unity Party, GDR State Council Chairman Walter Ulbricht explained his views on the German problem just prior to the Vienna summit meeting. He also discussed alleged western plans to cross the GDR border by force in case of a GDR-Soviet peace treaty.

"If the Bonn Government or anyone else plans to cross the GDR frontier, would it not be better to come to Berlin by train or car in a proper and polite way and to negotiate a peaceful solution of the German question?" Herr Ulbricht inquired.

"We in the German Democratic Republic have done everything possible so that a peace treaty might be concluded with a unified peaceloving German state. We have made countless proposals to the West German Bundestag and to the western powers . . . The Bonn Government has rejected every attempt at an understanding and thus also at a peace treaty with a unified Germany."

A peace treaty between the GDR, the Soviet Union and other countries which fought Hitler would not bring the slightest danger of a conflict, he continued. As for charges that the GDR would stop traffic to West Berlin, he said: "That is all nonsense. We do not want to block any transport routes. It is only necessary that the required contractual basis for using land, water or air routes which cross the territory of the GDR be arrived at in agreement with the GDR. We are ready to make such agreements. This is a regulation recognised in all countries and guaranteed by international law. If our planes want to fly over the territory of the U.S.A., France, Britain or West Germany, for example, then we need the permission of the governments in those countries. We want neither more nor less than this right . . .

"I wish to repeat that no-one wants to prejudice the self-determination of the population of West Berlin."

A. J. P. Taylor, Well-Known Oxford Don, Says:

Recognise GDR, Agree on W. Berlin

A. J. P. Taylor, well-known Oxford University historian and television commentator, advocated a free city in West Berlin and recognition of the GDR in a controversial leader-page article for the London "Sunday Express" of May 21st. Here are excerpts from the article:

Soviet Russia has every right to take precautions against a united Germany. Once we recognise this ... the problem of Germany can cease to divide Soviet Russia and the United States.

Eastern Germany exists. Its existence is of vital importance for the Russians. The Americans need deny its existence no longer.

Who is going to complain? Certainly no sane person in Great Britain should do so. No one wants to fight a war for the reunification of Germany. No one in his senses wants to keep British forces in Germany at vast expense to the taxpayer and grave detriment to our balance of trade.

The question of East Germany can be settled by a stroke of the pen. Berlin presents a more burning problem. Mr. Krushchev has made it clear that he will raise this question in the course of the summer.

We shall be in terrible difficulties if we let things drift. We shall be faced with a bitter choice between humiliation and provocative action.

For what? For a position which is untenable in theory and practice. The Western troops in Berlin could be arrested by a corporal's guard of Soviet police. Indeed, West Berlin can be made unworkable merely by economic pressure.

Does this mean that we should abandon the inhabitants of West Berlin unconditionally, after protecting and encouraging them for so long?

By no means. On the contrary, we can give West Berlin greater security once we recognise Eastern Germany.

West Berlin is useless in itself. It has been kept going only as a symbolic gesture towards a united Germany. We have no interest there, only a point of honour: our repeated pledge that West Berlin should not be absorbed into the Communist East.

The Russians are prepared to meet this point of honour. They have proposed repeatedly that West Berlin should be made a neutral Free City, detached from their bloc as from ours.

It could even be administered by the United Nations, an experiment likely to be a good deal more successful than the UNO effort in the Congo.

What is wrong with the idea of West Berlin as free city? This solution would free us from an impossible responsibility. It would remove, at a blow, most of the tension from Central Europe. It would strengthen enormously the prospects for world peace.

But it demands the recognition of Eastern Germany as a preliminary. Once that is settled, everything else falls into place. Eastern Germany will accept the Soviet line. It will gladly pay the price of leaving West Berlin alone.

This solution is the best for us. It is also the best for the Germans, though many of them refuse to admit it.

Germany, East and West, will cease to be a stumbling block between the Great Powers. The Germans will be free to prosper undisturbed, which is what the sensible ones among them want to do.

More than this, recognition of Eastern Germany and security for West Berlin open the door to German unity in the only form in which it is tolerable to others. The three States can form a German confederation with every independence except the independence to threaten others.

Here is a bold constructive policy which President Kennedy can put forward when he meets Mr. Krushchev. It is a policy which meets very reasonable Russian anxiety.

Peripheral Questions

Senator Ellender (Democrat, Louisiana): General, I do not want to get into any kind of an argument, but we are now in my opinion reaping a lot of trouble from things we have done in the past. Of course, I voted to build strong defences around the periphery of Russia, and here the people are squealing like stuck pigs because of the incident in Cuba right next to our door, but we have been doing that to Russia for the past seven or eight years, have we not?

General Thomas B. White (Chief of Staff, US Air Force): Yes, Sir.

Senator Ellender: We have built up armies in Laos. We have built up armies in Iran. We have built up armies all round the periphery of Russia, and we are bound to expect retaliation.

Senator Chavez (Democrat, New Mexico): We also have an air base within 150 miles in Turkey.

Senator Ellender: I say, you can expect retaliation, can you not?

General White: I think all these things we have done are in the best interests of the free world and of the United States.

(From the US Senate Appropriation Hearings, April 26th 1961)

GERMAN REPORT adds: And the USA maintains a military base in West Berlin, one hundred miles within the borders of the socialist German Democratic Republic, and has pushed the establishment of a West German nuclear army right along the borders of the German Democratic Republic and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

GDR, SU Sign Trade, Credit Pact

The Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic spelled out final details of their trade exchanges for the years 1962-1965 on May 30th after negotiations in Moscow. The Soviet Union also granted the GDR a long-term credit of more than 2,000 million marks (about £167,000,000).

Among the most important products which the Soviet Union will supply to the GDR, its largest trade partner, are non-ferrous metals, industrial equipment, turbines, lumber, petroleum, ores, meat, butter and fish. In exchange it will receive diesel motors, pumps and compressors, railway waggons, ships, agricultural machinery, radio and communications equipment and assorted consumer goods.

The two countries will co-ordinate production more closely to avoid unnecessary duplicated efforts.

Brazil Trade Jumps

Sr. Joao Dantas, Brazil's roving trade representative, wound up a trip through eastern Europe's socialist countries in East Berlin, where he signed an important trade protocol with GDR trade leaders on May 28th.

Trade between the two countries is expected to rise to at least five times its present level in the next five years after the agreement is finally signed in the South American country this summer. Aside from its traditional coffee purchases, the GDR will probably import fruit, spices and raw materials in exchange for industrial equipment and a wide variety of technical commodities.

Photos of E. and W. Berlin . . .

"East Berlin has the cold calm of a fenced-in graveyard ... Here and there a fragment of a church still sticks up."

Toni Howard, "Saturday Evening Post", February 28th 1959

"No people, no cars, emptiness ... Like a giant cardboard stucco set after shooting hours, the streets of East Berlin are deserted ... There is hardly anybody in the streets, not even a stray cat."

Taya Zinkin, "The Guardian", Manchester, August 5th 1960

"After a lapse of seven years, the lights of West Berlin seem brighter, and, by comparison, the gloom of East Berlin is even gloomier than it was then ... The old centre of the city, now in the Soviet sector, remains a grim unreconstructed desert ..."

"The Times", London, April 10th 1961

All readers of GERMAN REPORT in the western world have read pieces of purple prose like those reproduced above, and have seen contrasting pictures of East and West Berlin similar to those printed on these two pages. The only difference is that our pictures show the brighter side of East Berlin, and the grimmer side of West Berlin.

The recent photographs on this page show (right) the bright lights and hurrying crowds at Friedrichstrasse Station, East Berlin, in the centre of the "grim unreconstructed desert" described by "The Times"; the picture below right shows the fine post-war housing on the Weberwiese, East Berlin, completed nine years ago; the picture below shows a non-gloomy crowd at a Sunday morning concert on the shore of the Spree in East Berlin.

Now look at the pictures on the next page.

. . . Which is Which?

YOU ARE ENTERING THE AMERICAN SECTOR
CARRYING WEAPONS OFF DUTY FORBIDDEN
OBEY TRAFFIC RULES
ВЫ ВЪЕЗЖАЕТЕ В АМЕРИКАНСКИЙ СЕКТОР
НОСИТЬ ОРУЖИЕ ЗАПРЕЩЕНО В НЕСЛУЖЕБНОЕ ВРЕМЯ
ПОДЧИНЯЙТЕСЬ ДОРОЖНЫМ ПРАВИЛАМ
VOUS ENTREZ DANS LE SECTEUR AMERICAIN
DEFENSE DE PORTER DES ARMES EN DEHORS DU SERVICE
OBEISSEZ AUX REGLES DE CIRCULATION
SIE BETRETEN DEN AMERIKANISCHEN SEKTOR

If the picture at left were printed in "Life" magazine, the caption might run like this: "On the other side of Berlin's Iron Curtain – the typical weed-grown deserted streets, the hollow burnt-out shell of a ruined church . . ." But if you read the four-language text on the hoarding, you will see that the weedy deserted street and the burnt-out church lie in the American Sector of West Berlin.

The photograph below right shows another grim street scene; this is Hedemann Strasse, West Berlin. The photograph below left shows a ruin which is still inhabited. It looks as if the war ended yesterday, and lies at No. 7 Wilhelm Strasse in West Berlin.

• • •

GERMAN REPORT, in presenting these two pages of pictures, does not wish to suggest that East Berlin, the socialist half of the city, is exclusively made up of neon-lights, happy workers on recreation, and fine new apartments, while West Berlin is solely filled with ruins and deserted weed-grown streets. We just wish to redress the balance. Anybody with a camera can find ruins and gloomy corners in Berlin, both East and West; or he can find bustling streets and bright lights in both parts of the divided city. The camera cannot lie, but the editor can.

No-one Cares About Dr Scheu

Under the pressure of world opinion, the West German courts have recently put on trial a number of "minor" war criminals, men who were guilty of killing a few dozen or a few hundred Poles, Jews or Russians.

What is the reaction of large sections of the West German public to these trials? Part of the answer is given in the following article, reprinted from "Die Welt", a responsible West German newspaper which has sometimes shown itself worried by the extent of neo-nazi influence in West Germany today:

In Aurich, East Friesland, a few kilometres from the North Sea, five men went on trial on Monday, April 24th: Dr Scheu, Struve, Bastian, Schmidt and Jagst — five men, who lived in our midst until May last year.

The trial is being held only in Aurich, and not at the bar of German public opinion. Even in the East Friesian town in which it is taking place it finds no echo. The court room is nearly empty, and I am the only reporter.

Is there no public interest because it deals with the death of "only" 220 Jews and not of 6,000,000 as in Jerusalem? Who is Dr Scheu compared to Adolf Eichmann?

Dr Theodor Werner Scheu, born on March 30th 1910, the main defendant in the Aurich trial, was a distinguished and influential citizen of West Germany until his arrest last May. He was the municipal doctor of the North Sea resort of Borkum, owner of a sanatorium and children's home, head doctor at the Borkum hospital, member of the town council and founder and chairman of the Borkum Equestrian Club.

We did not know Adolf Eichmann, who lived in South America before his arrest. But we knew Dr Theodor Scheu well, we trusted him with our children, we sat with him at the same table, we gave him important positions and prestige. We did not know that the hand which stroked our children's heads had, twenty years ago, shot other fourteen-year-old children cruelly and cold-bloodedly in the back of the neck in front of a newly-dug mass grave.

At the end of June 1941, about ten days after the Russian campaign began, 220 Jews between 14 and 60 years old were murdered in the small Lithuanian town of Naumiestis, just beyond the German frontier. They were shot by a group of 14 to 16 Germans, most of them members of the SS cavalry led by SS Lieutenant Werner Scheu, today the main defendant in the Aurich trial.

Two of the 14 to 16 Germans who killed 220 Jews are known to be dead, five are defendants on trial. The other 8 to 10 Germans who took part in the murder at Naumiestis live amongst us, we talk with them and perhaps even trust them with our children.

Dr Scheu asserts today that he cannot remember the names of the others, though he served together with them for years.

Dr Scheu has admitted killing eight of the Jews with his own hands. Following the "action", as he calls it, he rode with his superior, Struve, to his estate, where they had coffee together with Scheu's mother.

Twenty years have passed since that day. This man has had to carry the images of that day around with him for twenty years, the prayers of the Jews kneeling on the side of the grave, the groans and cries of the victims who were not killed immediately, the whole terrifying scene. Today he stands up in front of the judge and says "When I look upon the matter today, I see that I acted wrongly."

But later, responding to the witnesses, he answered monotonously, "None of it is true" or "I don't know that witness".

As I left the courtroom, I heard the defendant lose his temper for the first time. "Yes", he said in an insulted voice. "Yes, of course, of course, I am a Super-Satan."

*

How did the inhabitants of Borkum react when they heard that their municipal doctor had been arrested — a man who had been one of their most prominent citizens for over ten years? How do they view the trial in Aurich these days? Are they shocked and horrified at this man who took part in killing 220 Jews and then lived amongst them like any other citizen, and better than most of them?

When I arrived in Borkum I bought the latest issue of the "Borkumer Zeitung" which appears three times a week, eager to read what it would print about the trial of their "municipal doctor". I read a great deal, about a get-together of World War One veterans, about a celebration of the volunteer firemen, and that an administrative secretary had just passed an examination. But I could not find a single word about the trial of Dr Scheu, who on the day before had surprisingly confessed to killing four more people than he had at first admitted.

On June 16th last year, shortly after Doctor Scheu had been arrested, this same "Borkumer Zeitung" had seen fit to print the following notice:

"The sudden arrest of Dr Scheu not only aroused great interest in our island but also gave rise to some of the most incredible rumours. After we asked the authorities concerned for clarifying information in order to combat these rumours, we received word that Dr. Scheu is suspected of having taken part in executions of Lithuanian Jews after the start of the Russian campaign. We hope that this report will take the edge off all other suspicions and statements."

It is hard to believe one's eyes. The most horrible suspicion which one can possibly have about a man is raised, and then this newspaper tells its readers that it has taken "the edge" off all other suspicions and

SS-Man Sentenced

Wilhelm Schaefer, 49, SS sergeant and guard in Buchenwald Concentration Camp, was sentenced to death by the Supreme Court of the GDR on May 20th. Schaefer had been a prosperous farmer in a Thuringian village and had successfully concealed his past until he was recognised accidentally by ex-inmates of the Buchenwald camp last year.

As a concentration camp guard, Schaefer had been noted for his excessive cruelty. He had often hung prisoners by their hands, manicled behind their backs, and then pushed them back and forth to increase their agony. On one occasion, he had put a pail over the head of a 15-year-old Soviet prisoner and then set wild police dogs to tear him apart. He admitted shooting over 100 Soviet prisoners himself and helping to kill more than a thousand others. Before the war was over, he was sent to the Soviet Union to kill captured partisans and also men, women and children accused of helping them, on the front commanded by present top West German General Friedrich Foertsch. He was later able to elude capture, change to civilian clothes and walk to the Thuringian village where he settled, after convincing local authorities that he had lost everything in the war. He cut out the incriminating SS blood group tattoo with a razor blade. Pleas for clemency by the defence attorneys on grounds that he had been brought up from childhood as a fascist, and that he had behaved properly since 1945, were rejected by the court.

can now "combat these most incredible rumours". This is actually a way of saying. "Don't worry, ladies and gentlemen, our municipal doctor has not embezzled any money, but only taken part in shooting Jews."

I spoke with people from this town of 5200 inhabitants about Dr Scheu, and I guess it was only bad luck which always led me to people whose answers made me more and more deeply hopeless. I did not hear a single critical word about Scheu, no accusation, no horror, no shock about the murder of the Jews. But there was lots of sympathy about "our doctor's bad luck" in getting "caught". The mildest form of response was the assertion that it was high time to stop bringing up these cases which lay so far in the past.

I also received answers which would have justified my reporting them to the police.

No-one had become reflective about the past, but all had one opinion: it was time to put an end to such court cases. They did not want to hear anything more about them on Borkum. Is this true only of Borkum?

The inhabitants of the island were surprised when their doctor was arrested. When they heard the reason, the "incredible rumours" ceased and there was no more talk of the "Scheu Case".

(Condensed from "Die Welt", Hamburg, April 28th and May 17th)

N. B. The court sentences ranged from 6 years for Dr Scheu down to 3 years for one of the accomplices, minus the time already spent under arrest by the convicted men.

Cheque for Scheck

A furniture dealer named Jakob Scheck was awarded a pension of 1027 marks monthly (about £80) plus a back payment of 100,000 marks (about £800) on May 19th because he had been nazi burgomaster of the skiing town of Garmisch-Partenkirchen under Hitler. The final decision to pay him and his heirs this pension was made by the Federal Administrative Court meeting in West Berlin after a legal dispute lasting seven years.

Scheck was a Nazi Party member since 1928, joined the storm troopers in 1929, received several awards from Hitler for long and faithful service and was entrusted by the government with running the famous resort town in the Bavarian Alps during the Olympic Winter Games held there in 1936.

He was elected to the town council of Garmisch-Partenkirchen again in 1960.

Meetings Plan Better Books, Bigger Muscles

Writers and Critics Debate Literature

Five hundred writers from the German Democratic Republic and guests from West Germany and 24 other countries met on May 25th in East Berlin for the 5th German Writers' Congress. The three-day meeting included discussions on helping the development of the younger generation of writers, on raising the level of literary criticism, and on ways to overcome a tendency towards cut-and-dried books or films which were politically correct but otherwise slow-moving and poorly-written. There was also a lively floor debate with West German writers on relative freedom for the writer in the two parts of Germany. The debate resulted in an agreement to promote an increased exchange of books between the GDR and West Germany.

Anna Seghers, author of the 1939 anti-nazi novel "Seventh Cross", was re-elected by the delegates as chairman of the GDR's German Writers' Association.

Sport Congress Confers

Past achievements and future plans in the field of sports were debated by over 1000 GDR athletes, trainers and sport group leaders meeting in East Berlin on May 28th and 29th at the 2nd Sport and Gymnastics Congress.

At the congress, the sport fans discussed especially how to get more people interested in athletics and how to break down the obstacles now impeding sport relations between West Germany and the GDR.

It was announced at the meeting that 456,000 people now engage in daily calisthenics periods in factories and offices, that 1,760,000 sport achievement pins have been won thus far by sport fans, and that more than 680,000 children take part in regular after-school sport activities. The organisation hopes to interest one out of three GDR citizens in some kind of active athletic participation by 1965, regardless whether it is football and boxing or only ping-pong and badminton.

Cultural Contacts with Germans Abroad

A "Working Committee for the Cultivation of German Culture and Language" was formed in East Berlin on May 30th. The new organisation is designed to help people of German descent abroad who are interested in keeping up their contacts with the German language, literature and cultural traditions and getting information about current German problems. Up till now these people were largely compelled to resort to the widespread and well-financed West German sources, thus getting a one-sided view of both past and present developments.

At its first meeting, the committee elected the writer Ludwig Renn as chairman. Renn had been a battalion commander and chief of staff in the International Brigades in Spain and later taught history in Mexico. Bodo Uhse, another writer who had fought in Spain and later lived in Mexican exile, became associate chairman.

SS-Men Needed to Police Democracy

Interior Minister Dufhues of North Rhine-Westphalia province was asked at a conference of police trade unionists on May 19th in Aachen whether the so-called "emergency laws" planned by the Adenauer Government would not bring the police "dangerously close to being a military organisation".

He replied that "the police cannot be released from their responsibility towards security and the maintenance of our democracy."

Then he was asked why his Ministry did not sack all the ex-SS men and nazi leaders who run the police in many parts of his province, especially in view of the Eichmann trial revelations. He answered: "We have neither the right nor the freedom to part with officials who served under National Socialism on the basis of any general rulings or over-all measures."

Dufhues is also a member of the ruling Executive Committee in Adenauer's Christian Democratic Union.

BERLIN NOTEBOOK

By Allen Mann

East Berlin is a rather staid town. Although it has about nine theatres, a good average compared to West Berlin (the same number of theatres for double the population) or almost any western city, yet it does not have a single strip-tease joint, burlesque show or similar place of entertainment. It is therefore not an ideal place for visiting businessmen to spend a riotous night out.

This does not mean that there is no lighter entertainment of any kind. Most celebrated centre of non-cerebral amusement in East Berlin is the Friedrichstadt Palace. Every evening it presents a variety show with acrobatics, hit-tunes, slapstick comedy and even leggy chorus-girls. It is usually sold out.

The other night my wife and I slipped over there, hoping against hope that none of our high-brow friends would see us. This is difficult because the Friedrichstadt Palace is right next door to the Berlin Ensemble, specialising in Brecht plays, where high-brows (and lots of other people) always throng.

We made it safely, however, and settled down in the big semi-circular theatre. The first half of the show featured the usual collection of local and foreign acts of daring, balancing talent and musical or dancing ability, including a clown act by two Englishmen trying courageously to break through the language barrier.

Tropical Troupe

But then came the hot second half of the programme. It was the Brasiliana ensemble, which bumped its way through a series of Mardi Gras dances from Rio, forest rituals, and plantation dances in such a torrid way that most of the audience hardly had a chance to decide whether to be enthused or shocked. At the end, old man Freud would have had a field day noting down the conflicts between husbands who wanted to applaud and wait for one more encore and their wives who wanted to leave immediately. It was indeed something new for unspoiled East Berliners — but since the dancing and music were wonderful, a bit of harmless vulgarity thrown in didn't really hurt. And then, shows in the Friedrichstadt Palace only last a month, anyway. After that, West Berlin will again have its total monopoly on "torrid" entertainment — with or without the good dancing and music which saved the Brasiliana show.

Leaving the theatre at last, we did meet one of our high-brow friends, by the way. But he was coming out, too, so we were saved.

Just a few blocks away is another centre of East Berlin's light entertainment, but of a very different kind. It's the Metropol Theatre, which specialises in operettas — the kind written by Johann Strauss or Jacques Offenbach in nineteenth century Vienna and Paris, with lots of old, familiar melodies, graceful waltzes and a few portions of slapstick-type humour now and then.

A current problem at the Metropol Theatre is to find more "modern operettas" or musicals, as they would be called elsewhere. It is felt that gypsy barons, waltz princes and merry widows are fine, but not fine enough to support an eleven-month-long theatre season.

Sewing Success

Recently, I saw a Metropol show designed to meet this need. Based on modern dance tunes, it tells how a seamstress who has worked up to be a fashion designer and a reporter who has disguised himself as an unskilled worker find their melodious way to each other. They also find their way to the Leipzig Fair, where they succeed in putting across her simple but attractive design for a new dress, despite all obstacles raised by her boss, who wants to publicise his own design, a grotesque copy of the very latest Paris model.

The show would not imperil "My Fair Lady" or the "West Side Story" even if it were in English, I admit. It has no really lasting melodies, and it still contains some of the stereotype people and situations we see too often here. But the audience liked the dances, the humour and the pokes at bureaucracy and at the dress-making industry in the GDR, which follows a "too little and too late" policy in women's fashions. Perhaps some day in the future an operetta from East Berlin about life and love in a nationally-owned enterprise will take the world's theatres by storm.

Right next door to the Metropol Theatre is "Die Distel" (The Thistle), East Berlin's "political cabaret". This is really top-flight entertainment — I have seldom laughed so loud and lustily in my life as at last night's performance.

"Cabaret" in Germany means something different than in English-speaking countries. A full evening's entertainment is provided in a small and intimate theatre (but without tables or refreshments). The show consists of small sketches, songs and skits, usually satirical, on current topics.

The seven "Distel" performers fire away at the newspapers in their current programme.

In one scene, a newsdealer calls out a West Berlin headline: "Princess Margaret Says: 'I Am Happy'"; his counterpart in East Berlin calls out his headline: "Walter Ulbricht Says: 'Socialism Will Win Out!'". The West Berliner shouts, "Queen Fabiola Says: 'I Am Happy'" and is answered: "Premier Grotewohl Says: 'Socialism Will Win Out!'". Then from the West come "Queen Farah Diba Says: 'I Am Happy'". He is rejoined with the East Berlin headline; "Premier Khrushchov Says: 'Socialism Will Win Out!'". But when the western headline blares out "Ex-Queen Soraya Says: 'I Am Unhappy'", the eastern newspaper salesman is hard put to it to match him. The westerner consoles his colleague but says, "Your papers need more peppy stories. Couldn't Khrushchov help out by marrying Soraya?"

The short snappy scenes are all full of puns, allusions and constant hard but always witty blows. Some are aimed at West Germans — braggadocio warriors like Defence Minister Strauss, the leading Social Democrats who have dropped everything from their platform but their name, self-righteous anti-Semites who have become even more hypocritical since the Eichmann trial and others of their type.

Press Problems

But the "Distel" comedians don't pull their punches when it comes to failings closer to home. Their main targets this time are the stodginess of so many newspapers here. Long speeches, boring reports on minor local industrial achievements, weak theatre criticism, tailored-to-order poems and lack of humour all take a drubbing. Even dull newspapers that are for peace are better than flashy ones praising A-bombs, the "Distel" players point out, but do they have to be dull?

Fittingly enough, "Die Distel" puts on its shows in the building of the Journalists' Association.

Edited and published fortnightly by John Peet. Democratic German Report, Friedrichstrasse 167/III, Berlin W 8, Telephone 22 29 68
Printed in Germany by (204). Veröffentlicht unter Lizenz-Nr. 694 beim Presseamt des Ministerpräsidenten der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik.